Is 2012 the year for desktop or client-side virtualization? According to Gartner, as of mid-2011, at least 40% of x86 architecture workloads have been virtualized on servers. This is good news for desktop virtualization, as many firms look to extend the benefits of virtualization to their end users. And a study from September 2011 by Forrester found that, while most organizations’ existing deployments touch less than 500 employees today, they have plans to scale these deployments to thousands — and ultimately tens of thousands — of users over the next two years. Now consensus holds that virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) adoption rates are up across the enterprise sector, with large-scale businesses turning to desktop virtualization solutions to tackle complex desktop environments, security and compliance issues, and an increasingly mobile workforce. But are small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) also adopting desktop virtualization, and is the SMB marketplace poised for explosive growth?

To determine whether or not SMBs are primed to adopt desktop virtualization as part of their end user computing strategy in 2012, Spiceworks and VMware conducted a study that included surveys as well as data from the 1.9 M members of Spiceworks.

Spiceworks is the world’s largest social business network for IT professionals. This particular social network offers free network management software coupled with an active forum for discussion around all things IT. For perspective on the activity level in this community, in 2011 alone IT professionals spent almost three billion minutes in Spiceworks, making it one of the most active sites in the IT industry.
Challenges facing SMBs.

Based on the results of the first survey, which included responses from 249 SMB IT professionals, it is clear that SMBs and enterprise-class organizations face many of the same challenges when it comes to managing end users — with security and compliance topping the list. This bodes well for desktop virtualization, as customers turn to desktop virtualization to meet security and compliance mandates by moving data off of end points and into the datacenter where it can be more efficiently and securely managed.

What are the biggest challenges your IT organization faces in managing end users? (ranked in order with 1 being the biggest challenge)

- Maintaining security and compliance: 48%
- Lack of people/resources to do everything that is being asked: 44%
- Finding enough budget to refresh hardware and end point devices: 37%
- Application/OS patching and updates: 32%
- Supporting a wide range of devices: 23%
- Managing users across remote locations: 20%

Figure 1
Spiceworks Community Survey
December 2011
Windows and VDI adoption.

However, in contrast to the enterprise sector, Windows upgrades won’t be a driving catalyst for desktop virtualization adoption with SMB customers this year. When polled, more than 50 percent of those surveyed responded that they won’t be upgrading their operating systems in the next 12 months.

While this data may suggest, as shown in Figure 2, that the 39 percent who are “not looking at this” have already upgraded to Windows 7, this is more than likely not the case. A Tech Target 2012 IT priorities survey found that Windows 7 is the main focus for IT decision makers this year, but this may be more in line with enterprise customers than those in the SMB segment.¹

![Figure 2: Spiceworks Community Survey December 2011](image)
Software as a Service (SaaS) in SMBs.

SaaS usage among SMBs provides another informative data point around desktop virtualization adoption. Today, SaaS is being heavily leveraged in organizations to deliver Google Apps, CRM software, marketing and analytics, HR, and collaboration tools to end users. According to Gartner, Inc. SaaS-based delivery will experience healthy growth through 2015, when worldwide revenue is projected to reach $22.1 billion.\(^4\)

But has the move towards SaaS taken hold yet in the SMB space? It appears that the answer to this is “not yet” or perhaps “not across the board.” Approximately 76 percent of SMBs access less than one-quarter of their applications (sometimes, much less as Figure 3 indicates) through the cloud. Given the strong uptake of SaaS in organizations of all sizes, both the number of SMBs using SaaS and the number of SaaS applications each SMB uses is bound to grow over time. However, the current survey results indicate that SMBs still use a significant number of Windows and legacy applications in their current day-to-day operations.

These circumstances augment the case for desktop virtualization in SMBs. Moreover, this will likely drive a large number of SMB customers to leverage desktop and application virtualization to bridge legacy investments as they move beyond Windows to the cloud.

![Figure 3](Spiceworks Community Survey December 2011)

**What percentage of your end user facing applications are SaaS/web-based applications today?**

- 52% 0-10%
- 24% 11-25%
- 10% 26-50%
- 9% 51-75%
- 5% 76-100%
VDI adoption rates.
Given the above trends and challenges facing SMBs, it is not surprising that more than 60 percent of customers are planning to roll out or evaluate desktop virtualization in 2012.

However, while 12 percent of SMBs are considering hosted desktop virtualization solutions to offset the costs and time needed to manage IT operations on-premise, 88 percent of SMBs — the vast majority — state a preference around implementing and managing these solutions in-house.

Interestingly, despite this preference, many of those surveyed also reported they are faced with a shortage of available manpower and resources. Scarce headcount and tight budgets coupled with the desire to manage deployments in-house indicate that SMBs will likely gravitate to VDI storage and compute appliances, along with “VDI in a box” solutions to keep things simple. Pivot 3, v3 and Nutanix all offer affordable VDI solutions to take SMB customers quickly from proof of concept to production.
Desktop virtualization vendor preference in SMB’s.

For the second part of the study, we investigated how desktop virtualization vendors stack up in SMB IT environments today. This investigation included data about VDI agent deployments among more than 4,000 members of the Spiceworks Community as well as a survey fielded to the same members. The results show VMware View leading in the number of deployed desktops with over half of the virtual desktop installations, (Figure 6). Additionally, from an SMB industry perspective, finance, education, government, healthcare and manufacturing all showed a higher propensity to install and use desktop virtualization.

As part of the second survey, we also asked a subset of the 4,000 customers why they selected the brand they deployed. Responses indicated that brand preference was due to products having specific features needed by company, the reputation of the vendor and price.

In conclusion, we believe our study shows a strong case for an increasing and important role for desktop virtualization in SMB environments. There are important operational and productivity benefits driving this trend, and desktop virtualization is well poised to be a major component of SMB IT in 2012 as firms look to bridge legacy investments and move beyond the Windows PC.
Trends around Desktop Virtualization for Small and Mid-sized Organizations

1 Gartner “Magic Quadrant for x86 Server Virtualization Infrastructure,” Thomas J. Bittman, George J. Weiss, Mark A. Margevicius and Philip Dawson, June 30, 2011. Gartner does not endorse any vendor, product or service depicted in its research publications, and does not advise technology users to select only those vendors with the highest ratings. Gartner research publications consist of the opinions of Gartner’s research organization and should not be construed as statements of fact. Gartner disclaims all warranties, expressed or implied, with respect to this research, including any warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose.

2 The Client Virtualisation Imperative, A Forrester Consulting Thought Leadership Paper Commissioned By Dimension Data, September 2011


About Spiceworks

Spiceworks™ the world’s largest social business platform for IT, connects 1.8 million IT professionals with more than 900 technology brands. By combining a Facebook-like community with free IT management software, Spiceworks helps businesses to discover, buy and manage $315 billion worth of technology products and services each year.

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